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PRESS RELEASE

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JULY 23, 2004

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BALD EAGLES RETURN TO THE CHANNEL ISLANDS

A dozen more American bald eagles, the symbol of our nation's freedom and heritage, will be released on the Northern Channel Islands this summer as a step towards reestablishing the historic island population. Today, ten juvenile bald eagles from Alaska will take their first trip to Santa Cruz Island as part of a five-year study to release bald eagles in the Northern Channel Islands.

The juvenile bald eagles along with other bald eagles released during the past two years will be monitored to determine whether bald eagles can successfully breed on the Northern Channel Islands. This feasibility study is one element of a larger effort to restore natural resources injured by DDTs and PCBs released into the Southern California Bight, administered by the Montrose Settlements Restoration Program.

The National Park Service and the Nature Conservancy co-own Santa Cruz Island and support the reestablishment of bald eagles as part of an island-wide restoration program that includes saving island foxes, relocating golden eagles, and eliminating nonnative feral pigs from the island.

"Bald eagles are one of the key missing elements of the island's natural ecosystem," said Channel Islands Superintendent Russell Galipeau. "They used to occur on all of the California Channel Islands. Their reestablishment is a significant step towards restoring the biological diversity of the park and sanctuary."

Since 2002, 23 bald eagles have been released at Santa Cruz Island. Of those released, 14 remain on the Northern Channel Islands. They have been joined by two additional adult bald eagles that have flown in from Santa Catalina Island. Four of the released eagles have migrated to the mainland, and have traveled as far as west as Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming.

The twelve birds being introduced to the islands this year will first acclimate in a “hack tower” for about a month prior to taking their first flight. Biologists will monitor the birds in their new environment by recording their feeding habits, dispersal, and physical health.

This year, researchers will also begin checking for evidence of contaminants in the eagles that were released in 2002 and 2003, to determine whether these birds have accumulated concentrations of DDT that would prevent them from breeding successfully. DDT interferes with calcium deposition in eggshells and causes eagles to lay eggs that are thin-shelled and easily crushed by parents in the nest. In addition to checking contaminant loads, biologists will use blood and feather samples to collect information about the eagles’ diet in an effort to better determine sources of DDT from their prey.

Further information on the Montrose Settlements and the restoration program can be found at <http://www.darp.noaa.gov/southwest/montrose>.

This publication is available online at: <http://www.nps.gov/chis/press072304.htm>

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The Montrose Settlements Restoration Program is overseen by the Natural Resource Trustees, which include representatives from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Park Service, California Department of Fish and Game, California State Lands Commission, and California Department of Parks and Recreation.

Acting on behalf of the public to restore natural resources injured by DDTs and PCBs

